

Present: Dwight Baker; Ray Day, Jr.; Dave Elliott; Holly Plackett, Chair; Joan Sells, Tina Shereen

Excused: Anirudh Sahni; Carla Saulter; Joan Michaels

Provisional Members: Miranda Leidich; Ed Miller

Staff: Barbara de Michele, Community Relations Planner; Kevin Desmond, General Manager; Arthur Thornbury, Council Staff

Plackett opened the meeting at 6:05 p.m. and welcomed General Manager Kevin Desmond.

Looking Forward to 2008

Desmond quickly reviewed the accomplishments of 2007 before looking ahead. "We had an excellent year," he said. In 2007, Metro hit its all-time high mark of 110 million riders. In the past four years, Metro has experienced a 15% growth rate. Some of Metro's new routes introduced in 2006 and 2007 have experienced 15% growth in a single year. The system is being stretched by the need for new coaches and new drivers. Metro also hit a new high mark of 1000 van pools, conducted a limited test of SmartCard (ORCA), introduced the South Lake Union Streetcar, began implementation of Transit Now improvements, installed 100 new bus shelters, established a new ferry district (including a Ferry Division within King County Department of Transportation), re-opened the transit tunnel, worked with Seattle DOT to maintain Third Avenue as a busway, successfully responded to construction on I-5, increased the number of transit police, and met driver hiring goals. Desmond thanked the TAC for its support of Metro marketing efforts, and noted that the Council approved a \$250,000 marketing budget for 2008, and a \$275,000 marketing budget for 2009.

Looking to the future, Desmond identified the following challenges facing Metro:

- 1) The SmartCard (ORCA) should be ready to launch in early 2009. SmartCard is important for two reasons: it introduces state-of-the-art technology to the Puget Sound region, and it marks the first time that the seven major transportation agencies in the region have cooperated on a single project.
- 2) Metro will replace its entire radio system in 2008. This is a much-needed technology upgrade and will allow Metro to introduce many new customer service innovations once it is installed.
- 3) Metro will develop and the Council will adopt the Comprehensive and Strategic Plans, which will guide Metro through 2018.
- 4) Metro will continue to aggressively provide new service under the Transit Now initiative. In the next few months, Metro management will make a recommendation to the Council for awarding the first partnership grants. The partnership program has been very well received, with approximately 20 strong proposals coming from

local municipalities and public-private entities. Metro launched its first partnership program with Childrens Hospital this year.

- 5) In 2008, Metro will complete capital plans for RapidRide implementation (2010 on Pacific Highway South; 2011 for West Seattle and Bellevue-Redmond).
- 6) In May, Metro will receive the first contingent of twenty-two new hybrid buses. Metro worked closely with the manufacturer to develop the prototype for future purchases.
- 7) Metro is participating in a coalition with SDOT and WSDOT to examine potential solutions for the Alaskan Way Viaduct. Whatever the outcome of those deliberations, Metro will play a major role in mitigating impacts.
- 8) Metro has been participating in the 520 Bridge deliberations. Again, Metro will play a major role in solving this regional transportation concern.
- 9) The legislature will be asked to pass legislation enabling tolling on bridges and highways. Metro supports this legislation as one way to solve funding issues on both the Alaskan Way Viaduct and SR520 Bridge.
- 10) In 2008, Metro will implement the fare increase approved by the Council during the budget hearings in November. Metro may experience some reduction in ridership as a result of the increase. A major communications effort will be implemented to inform the public of the increase.
- 11) The Amalgamated Transit Union will vote on a proposed contract this month. Desmond is hopeful it will be approved.
- 12) Operator recruitment remains a high priority. The average age of current drivers is 52. As these drivers approach retirement, Metro must find ways to recruit and retain younger drivers. Without a sufficient work force, Metro will not be able to accomplish many of its goals.
- 13) Several construction projects will come online in 2008, including plans for a new bus base located in South King County.
- 14) Metro will also be increasing the number of transit police. Due to increased ridership, incidents of crime and violence on the buses have also been increasing. Metro will install more cameras on buses. By the end of 2008, Metro will have 250 buses with active cameras. They have demonstrably deterred crime.
- 15) Again due to increased ridership, on-time performance is becoming a major concern. Metro has been able to invest funds in schedule maintenance, thanks to Transit Now. However, on-time performance has decreased significantly over the past few years and Metro is taking aggressive measures to improve speed and reliability.

Trip Planner

TAC reviewed and discussed a response from Gayle Torgerson to Anirudh Sahni's critique of Metro's Trip Planner.

Members agreed they would not respond directly to Torgerson's document but rather use it as a starting point for a policy discussion and possible advisory recommendation. The group said they would direct any advisory recommendation either to Metro management or the Council. They want the response to be positive and directed at potential policy and/or funding changes.

Members discussed possible approaches to developing an advisory recommendation.

- Forming a sub-committee that would work on general principles of customer outreach and accessibility that might drive future decisions on a number of fronts (i.e., trip planner, website, marketing, etc.)
- Setting aside one meeting for this topic in which the TAC could critique the trip planner as a group, and then develop "general principles" from the critiques that could be used for formulating policy statements.
- Setting aside one meeting to craft a letter of advice from the group, to be directed to Metro management or the Council.

TAC asked de Michele to place this item on the retreat agenda for further discussion. In addition, Ed Miller and Miranda Leidich volunteered to work on a sub-committee if one is formed. TAC also asked staff to explore what types of information or advisory recommendations would be most helpful to Metro decision-makers.

Committee Business

De Michele reported that Executive Sims has appointed Miranda Leidich, Ed Miller, Joan Michaels and Dan Chavre to the TAC. Their nominations will go before the Transportation Committee for confirmation on January 23.

Plackett adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.